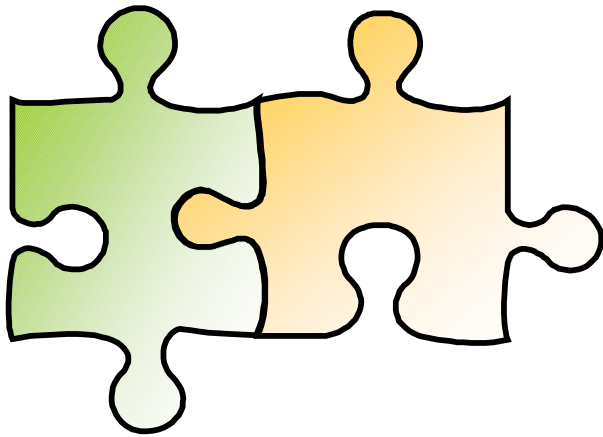
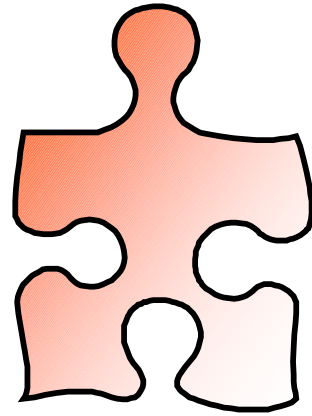
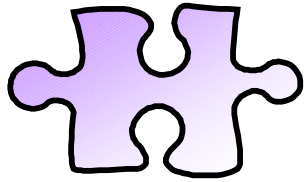


The Middle East Partnership Initiative Programming Guide



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State/Near East Affairs

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Foreword

This is a simple guide to a complex world, the world of designing and managing U.S. Government programs overseas. It can be daunting to navigate this world alone without map or compass; to conceive, craft, and launch a new idea that will advance the goals of U.S. foreign policy – and not break any laws in the process. So, before getting started, let us recall the reassuring words of the patron saint of guidebook creators, Douglas Adams: “*Don’t panic!*”

This is a short document, designed for Foreign Service Officers who have not yet memorized the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). It presents a high level summary of important Federal laws, regulations and best practices that will help diplomats design and manage activities under the Middle East Partnership Initiative. It will also help Foreign Service Officers understand the key elements of how USAID manages programs. Finally, it is hoped that the guide will inspire you to ask questions such as, does this great new idea fit our strategy? Have we consulted all the stakeholders? What must we learn before we can begin? How much is this going to cost? Who is going to manage this activity and report on results? What results do we expect to achieve? Sufficiently inspired? *Mumtez*. Now let’s turn to what this guide is not...

This guide will *not* survey all Federal legislation and guidance on planning, procurement, and managing for results. Indeed, there are vast libraries of information – most of it written in a foreign language that rivals Arabic in its complexity but not its poetry – available on the subject, which is why we have included an annex listing additional references, including individuals to contact for further information and clarification. We have also anticipated that this guide may stimulate further discussion and have therefore appended a list of frequently asked questions.

Overview by Section

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was launched by Secretary Powell in December 2002 to bridge the “hope gap” that exists between expectation and reality in many countries of the Middle East. This programming guide will help Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) program funds effectively and rapidly in support of that Initiative. The guide has five sections:

I. Suggestions for Setting Goals and Strategies

Here we’ll go over the basics of designing strategies and carrying out the analyses you’ll need to help you define the problem, consider all your alternatives and come up with a realistic solution. This provides general guidance on where to begin to respond to State 126550.

II. Setting Up Federal Programs

Some time after strategies have been set based on your response to this cable and the inter-agency process, specific programs will be designed to achieve your goals. Fear not! This section will guide you through the maze of Federal laws and regulations that govern project planning, financial management, and managing for results.

III. Program Management Tools

This section will describe tools that will help you manage your program effectively.

IV. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

While you may feel you are standing alone at the edge of this complex world, rest assured that many people have passed through this door before you. This section identifies and discusses several key issues your predecessors have raised about designing and funding foreign assistance activities.

V. Additional Resources

Here you will find the goldmine at the end of the rainbow. Well, maybe not, but we think you’ll find this section useful. It lists experts, websites, and toolkits that are available to help you design the best program possible.

I. Setting Goals and Strategies

A. Beginning with the Basics and Holding Course

To support MEPI's goals, U.S. Embassies in the NEA Region have been asked to communicate their vision of the future for their host countries. However, this vision needs to be realistic and ultimately accompanied by a promising strategy. In simple terms, Posts are asked to communicate what is truly needed and what they are capable of achieving, that is to do some "strategic planning". The benefit of strategic planning is that it helps us to make tough choices because, in the immortal words of strategic consulting guru Mick Jagger, "You can't always get what you want."

- 1. Work Within Your Boundaries.** As suggested by the State 126550, you'll need to work within the boundaries of the overall goals set for MEPI and from your Embassy's most recent MPP. From there, you can begin developing ideas, as suggested in the Cable, about the "achievable reforms (with measurable outcomes)" that will bring about your vision.
- 2. Define the Problem and Set Your Objective.** But, in order to decide what reforms are needed and how to achieve them, you'll need to clearly define the problem you're trying to solve. Only then can you set a clear, achievable objective to solve that problem.
- 3. Secure Funding.** MEPI is ESF funded and centrally programmed by the State Department's Partnership Initiatives Office (NEA/PI) in coordination with interagency working groups. Congress established the economic support fund (ESF) to promote economic and political stability in strategically important regions where the United States has special security interests.

Programming decisions are codified in Allocation Memos (AM) from Assistant Secretary/NEA to the Deputy Secretary. These memos are drafted by NEA/PI and cleared by the relevant interagency partners. A Congressional Notification (CN) is then sent to Congress. Congress has fifteen days to review the CN. If a "hold" (or a Congressional request for additional information) is not placed upon the CN, it is cleared (or approved) and funds can be obligated after the fifteen day period.

B. Technical Analyses: Information to Support Tactical Decisions

- 1. Identify all the Ways You Could Solve your Problem.** This is the slightly tricky part. Most problems have more than one answer. Designing a good strategy means considering the options for reaching your objective and choosing between them. Often, deciding which option is the best one requires additional information. This is where analyses are useful. Quality analysis, done at an early stage, can help you identify past trends, areas of need, and opportunities within a specific area.
- 2. Carry Out a SWOT Analysis.** A "SWOT Analysis" is one of the most widely-used tools for evaluating alternative solutions. It helps you identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in each approach. Carrying out this analysis is often illuminating, both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done and in putting problems into perspective.



TIPS for carrying out a SWOT Analysis:

1. Consider the **strengths**.
What are the advantages of the solution?
What would work well?
How could you complement what the host government and other players are trying to accomplish?
 2. Consider the **weaknesses**.
What are disadvantages of this solution?
What should be avoided?
Has this approach been proven?
Could there be difficulty in measuring the impact it has on the problem you're trying to solve?
 3. Consider the **opportunities**.
Where are the positive opportunities facing you?
What are interesting trends you can take advantage of?
 4. Consider the **threats**.
What obstacles will you face?
What could go wrong?
Could your approach hurt a population group or create or add to existing conflict?
Could it damage the environment?
3. **Beware of falling too quickly for easy solutions.** Given that time is short to develop strategies, it would be natural to take something that has already been developed. Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with doing that, accepting someone else's strategy as a *fait accompli* could take you out of the driver's seat, get you into trouble, or both.

If you hand this exercise over to consultants or other people outside the Embassy, you'll need to be sure they too consider every aspect of the problem, the constraints, and realistic solutions. But, they may not be motivated to do this for a number of reasons. They may be content to draw on the limited knowledge they already have, or they may have a personal interest in a specific proposal. In the worst case scenario, their company or NGO may work in the field and expect future business, leading them to propose a program that fits their organization, not necessarily one that fits your problem.

4. **Engage others, meaning "all relevant stakeholders".** After some fifty years of experience to draw on, international development experts recognize the need for "participatory approaches" in all stages of the project cycle, from conducting needs assessments and implementing projects to evaluating them.

What should this really mean to you? It means that if you are working towards a MEPI goal, you should talk to those who will be impacted by the strategy you are developing. For example, to develop a strategy for increasing girls' enrolment in basic education, it is important to talk to ministry of education officials, education experts, and if possible, to girls and families with kids in and out of school. All of this information would give you

a more informed view of how to respond to the underlying reasons why girls do not go to school.



TIPS for conducting good analyses and developing strategies:

- Define your agenda early. Give yourself time to conduct relevant analyses!
- Plan ahead. Although you may not have a lot of time, you do have a few weeks to talk with various stakeholders in the country or region.
- Consult your colleagues in Washington. USAID's ANE Regional Bureau (*see Section V*) in-house expertise and can identify other technical resources within USAID, for example, experts in microenterprise development, trade policy, and the development of democracy and civil society.

II. Setting up Programs

A. Project/Activity Planning

Once you've designed a strategy, you will need to plan specific activities that will support your strategy and achieve your goals. The Foreign Assistance Act¹ requires that foreign aid be adequately planned and described. So project or activity planning is like gravity: it's not just a good idea, it's the Law. The following checklist will help you plan your projects/activities and manage for results:

- 1. Contribute to Strategic Objectives.** The project you are considering should contribute directly toward one of MEPI's strategic goals and objectives: political, economic, or educational reform. Projects should fall directly under your strategy and support the overall goal you laid out at the beginning. For example, if your strategic objective is based on increasing economic growth, you may have one project that focuses on small and medium enterprise development, another that emphasizes trade capacity building and a third that works on economic policy reform at the national level. If you are trying to improve the quality of education in a country, your projects might include teacher training, curricular reform or textbook redesign and increasing community involvement in the schools.
- 2. Define the Project Elements.** Once you've determined what types of projects will support your strategic objective, you can get into the real substance of designing the project or activity. This will include determining exactly what it is you want to do; who should benefit from the project; where you will want to carry it out, i.e. in a specific community or region or nationally; what partners you might want to work with; and what supplies or other services you will need.
- 3. Specify the Period of Performance.** The project must have a start and an end date, typically for a period of not longer than five years.
- 4. Plan for Monitoring Performance.** In other words, if you don't know where you're going, don't be surprised if you don't get there. Establish benchmarks and deliverables for your project and make sure that you're the first to know when these benchmarks are not met. Also, explain how the project's deliverables are expected to contribute toward the larger result you're trying to achieve.

¹ Foreign Assistance Act, Section 611(a).

- 5. Include an Illustrative Budget.** You must estimate what your proposed project will cost. The U.S. Government requires an independent cost estimate. This means you should indicate the total cost for all project proposals you submit to NEA. Building this cost estimate will require you to estimate the level of effort required to complete the work as well as travel and other costs. A budget template is attached (see Annex B) with these major categories already listed, so all you will have to do is fill in the blanks.

- 6. Assessment of the Potential Environmental Impact.** It is a Federal requirement to assess the potential impact your project will have on the environment. This is especially true for projects in agriculture, construction, and infrastructure development. USAID has specialists who can help with this assessment. (See 22CFR 216 or contact the resource person listed in Section V for more information.)

- 7. Include a Procurement Plan.**

Your proposals should include a procurement plan, particularly if you need a new contract or grant, or if you plan to purchase equipment or vehicles. This will help the contracts or grants officer understand your needs and plan their workload. *Procurement plans must describe how you plan to secure the services needed to carry out your project, either through a pre-competed contract*

or grant, conducting a competition for a new award, or requesting a waiver of competition requirements based on single or sole source criteria.² You must also satisfy the U.S. Government's source and origin requirements if you plan to procure services, equipment or commodities. Note that the U.S. Government is not eager to incur certain costs, such as salaries of other government officials, non-U.S. vehicle procurements, and maintenance of infrastructure.³

- 8. Clarify the Role of Partners.** Who will you work with? Describe the role and relationship of the host government, other donor organizations, and potential partners in carrying out the project. Also, keep in mind that the hot new thing in development is public-private partnerships, so look into the possibility of helpful alliances with private sector investors. But please make sure your partners will be able to carry out their part in the project *before* you commit funds to them. Make sure, for example, that they have the

Is there a conflict of interest?

(Answer, next page)

The Director of Organization A is invited by a U.S. Embassy official to assess the health care needs in Country X. Upon completion of the needs assessment, an Embassy task force discusses the findings. These findings are posted on the Internet with an invitation for comments from consultants and advisors. Subsequently, the task force meets and, taking into consideration the assessment and comments from the Internet, decides to design a new activity and solicit bids in a Request for Proposals.

The Embassy task force and the Director of Organization A then design the Statement of Work for the RFP. In preparing the SOW, the team draws on the needs assessment, knowledge obtained from earlier team meetings, counterpart comments, and firsthand experience. Upon completing the SOW, the core elements of which were drafted by the Director of Organization A, the team writes a brief memo outlining the range of resources it considered for the SOW design. Organization A would like to compete for the contract.

² USAID has several pre-competed contracts, cooperative agreements and grants. See USAID's Office of Procurement website for more information: www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/.

³ See 22 CFR 228 for guidance on source/origin requirements.

resources and experience to handle the financial management, procurement, and personnel management aspects of Federal funding because it is a complicated world, as you are finding out, and it does require extra staff and knowledge.

9. **Establish the Project Management Structure.** Before you invite Al Jazeera to profile your new project, determine who in the Embassy community will manage it. Some factors to consider: Are U.S. Direct Hire (USDH) personnel present in the country who have the skills and time to manage this project? If not, who will be the project manager? Do you need a project management team? Will you need to recruit and hire outside help (Foreign Service Nationals, Personal Services Contractors)? Which U.S. Government agencies and foreign donors are active in this field? Can you share resources?

10. **Ensure the Availability of Funds.** Federal Law requires that funds be available before they can be awarded to a contractor or grantee.⁴ Note that this does *not* mean that the project must be fully funded before it can begin. It just means we cannot commit what we do not have. (And because MEPI uses ESF funds, remember not to promise funds before State/DS has approved the allocation – see pp. 5, 16)

B. Organizational Conflict of Interest

Recognizing when an Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) exists and knowing how it can be avoided is sometimes tricky. OCI exists when an individual or organization is unable, or potentially unable, to provide the U.S. Government with impartial assistance or advice due to their involvement in other activities or relationships.⁵ OCI can occur under a contract, grant or cooperative agreement (see www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/200/2016s1.pdf for more detailed information). Three concepts related to OCI merit further discussion:

1. **Bias** exists when an organization that has designed a project or a Statement of Work (SOW) for a contract or grant also seeks to implement the award in question. Bias can be avoided if an outside organization's involvement in the design is limited and U.S. Government staff actively participate in designing the project.
2. **“Directly, predictably, and without delay”** is the legal standard by which OCI is determined to exist. This phrase comes from the granddaddy of OCI cases. A federal judge ruled that an organization that designs an activity or develops material that leads directly, predictably, and without delay to a SOW for a contract or grant may not compete

OCI Answer: Yes. Because the Director of Organization A drafted the core content of the Statement of Work, Organization A cannot compete for this contract. OCI could be avoided and Organization A could bid on the contract if the Embassy task force, after having reviewed the contribution of Organization A, drafted the core content of the SOW itself.

TIPS: 1. When an RFP is “on the street,” don’t provide answers to questions posed by individual bidders. Instead, keep a list of questions and answer all inquiries publicly on the Internet.

2. You are encouraged to solicit comments from partners on draft strategies. However, to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, establish an open forum for discussion and publish all comments on the Internet.

⁴ Federal Anti-Deficiency Act – 31 U.S.C. Section 1341(a)(1).

⁵ FAR 9.505

to implement the project in question, either as a prime or a subcontractor.

3. **An unfair competitive advantage** occurs when an organization competing for an award possesses an unauthorized copy of the secret code. But seriously, an unfair competitive advantage is possessing (a) proprietary information that was obtained from a Government official without proper authorization, or (b) source selection information that is relevant to the award but is not available to all competitors.

III. Program Management Tools

A. Project Management

Now that you've identified your strategic objective, conducted the relevant analyses, consulted the host government, selected an implementing partner, and made an award (whew!), you're ready to make your vision a reality. However, that will require managing the project effectively.



Here are some **TIPS**:

1. Assign clear **roles and responsibilities** to individual team members. If the individual players don't know what bases they're covering, your team may lose the game.
2. Clearly define **benchmarks of success** in Statements of Work and keep a close eye on progress toward those benchmarks. Delays in completing specific steps, or problems in the quality of work should act like giant neon signs saying "detour ahead". They are your warning that the results you were expecting may not happen quite as you had planned, so you may need to make some adjustments.
3. If you are the designated project manager, your responsibilities for **monitoring contractor/grantee performance** will include: reviewing and approving workplans, deliverables and performance reports; reporting variations, substitutions and problems with key personnel; recommending modifications; analyzing and approving financial reports; preparing annual Contractor Performance Reports; and making sure that copies of contractor/grantee reports are sent to State/NEA and USAID/ANE. We know this sounds like a lot, but it is required under procurement procedures.

B. Financial Management

There are countless dark and windowless rooms in dozens of Federal annexes around the Beltway filled with boxes of OMB circulars and Government guidelines on financial management. In fact, if you listen carefully, you can sometimes hear the plaintive wail of Presidential Management Interns translating these documents into English. We will not attempt to summarize that guidance here. Instead, let us identify some key concepts and best practices in Federal Government financial management.

1. **Accrued Expenditures.** You must track and report on accrued expenditures, that is, the sum total of disbursements (i.e., invoices paid) plus accruals (i.e., goods and services received by the Federal Government but not yet paid for).
2. **Planned and Actual Expenditures.** As simple as it sounds, make a point to compare planned versus actual expenditures. Variations may mean that there is a potential cost overrun, time has slipped and targets may not be met, or that you may have to reassess or modify your planned results.
3. **Funds Control.** If anyone ever told you audits were fun, they were either lying or accountants. Avoid one by ensuring you only use funds for authorized purposes; you use funds efficiently; you do *not* exceed the amount you were authorized; Congress is informed and approves the funds to be spent; and you do not obligate and spend money that has not been appropriated and allocated.

4. **Prompt Payment.** Before you authorize issuing a check, make sure that everything you expected from the contract has been completed as specified in the terms and conditions of the award. But don't get too comfortable while you think about it. The Federal Prompt Payment Act has a safeguard against procrastination. It says you have to authorize payment for your contractors in a *timely* manner or reconcile any disputed costs. Failure to do so will enable the contractor to seek penalty payment.

C. Performance Management / Monitoring

Now that you have dealt with the nitty gritty of project and financial management, you will soon be ready to tell the world how wonderful your project is and everything that it accomplished. Well, you can't do that unless you know what it is you intended to do, how the various parts (advisors, workshops, toolkits, etc) are supposed to fit together and how you will know that you did it correctly. In other words, how will you measure your results?

Effective **performance management plans / monitoring** include:

- **A calendar of performance management tasks** (yes, you can use your Far Side desk calendar) showing when each task; for example, gathering data, conducting a data quality assessment, and submitting quarterly reports; will be carried out.
- **Baselines** for each performance indicator. You need to know where the starting and ending lines are before you can run the race.
- Plans for **information quality control**. This is the old adage we have all heard about not comparing apples and oranges (or parakeets and monkeys). It can't be done, so don't try. Make sure you use consistent methods to collect information or data and that you can compare this information over time. At the end of the day, you'll want to be able to show what impact your project had over several months and years. Also, be sure to include gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data if the project could affect women and men differently.
- **A description of performance indicators** to assess progress. Think of a performance indicator as an instrument, like a thermometer, that measures change. Effective indicators are consistent, practical, and closely follow the results they are intended to measure.

D. Knowledge Sharing

1. If performance management is used to answer the question, What change is occurring as a result of our investment?; **evaluations** are conducted to answer the question, **Why** has change occurred? Two things to keep in mind when conducting evaluations:
 - Make sure that the people involved in the evaluation agree on what they are trying to find out and what they plan to do with that information.
 - Don't let your evaluations be buried with the pharaohs. Evaluations provide an extremely important feedback loop that helps an organization learn and improve. Use them as a communications tool, post them on the internet, share them with your friends and family (and your host government counterparts).

2. Reporting on progress – or lack thereof – is critical to managing for results. If you meant to go to Mars but ended up on the moon, knowing why is important. You want to be sure you end up in the right place or at least a little closer the next time. Here are some required reports to help you do that:

a. Implementing partner reports. Make sure that the grant or contract includes reporting requirements. Even grantees are asked to submit quarterly and annual reports, for example, in which they communicate progress, any delays or problems in implementing the project, changes in key personnel, and suggested revisions to benchmarks of success. Specifically for MEPI, the implementing agency or contractor is responsible for providing State and the relevant US Government agency that directly manages the program (this may be the USAID CTO or someone from another agency) with monthly informal emails on progress and formal quarterly progress and financial report within 30 days of the end of the quarter by email. This quarterly progress report should highlight 1) progress to date, 2) discussion of issues, and 3) current burn rate of funds by activity/target and unobligated funds remaining.

b. Project Closeout Report. Congratulations! Your project has come to a smooth and successful end. You've helped hundreds of schoolgirls learn to use a computer, the *Washington Post* has profiled your success story, and you've received a cash award and a nice cable from Washington to frame.

You're done, right? Not so fast. The Federal Acquisition Regulations describe mandatory closeout procedures for contracts.⁶ This closeout report should include information such as the total cost of the project, including counterpart contributions; the principal implementing partners; a summary of project results and impact (i.e. what exactly did you accomplish); how you intend to keep your project going over the long-term and what might stand in the way.

⁶ See FAR (4.804).

IV. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Is strategic planning required for MEPI projects?

Yes, all MEPI projects must be strategically-planned. In reality, any well-designed, strategically-planned project ensures that your program is focused on goals that are ambitious, yet achievable. Engaging in strategic planning helps focus your planning process, from designing your strategy to developing projects, on priority issues to meet your goals. See State 126550 for more guidance on your first step, i.e. designing a strategy.

2. What factors should I consider when choosing an implementing instrument (e.g., grant, contract, cooperative agreement)?

Contract: A contract is used when you want to purchase specific services, i.e. technical services or training, or a commodity where you can specify what you want provided.

Cooperative Agreement: This agreement is used when you need to fund the recipient to accomplish a general objective. Cooperative agreements allow for substantial involvement between USAID/State and the recipient while the activity is being carried out.

Grant: A grant is used when the main purpose is to fund the recipient to carry out their program. In this case, the recipient has a great deal of freedom to pursue its stated program, and substantial involvement is *not* anticipated between USAID and the recipient while the activity is ongoing.

3. What are the procurement regulations for MEPI projects?

MEPI projects must comply with the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) that govern all Federal agencies. Thus, requirements for full and open competition are the rule, unless waived due to specific exceptions. USAID's ADS Chapters 302 and 303 provide details on USG procurement requirements (see www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/300/).

4. Is full and open competition always required under MEPI?

Full and open competition is required, unless waived, for all contracts over \$100,000 and all cooperative agreements and grants greater than \$50,000 or lasting more than one year.

At USAID, exceptions to full and open competition for technical and professional services can only be made by a USAID Assistant Administrator (Assistant Secretary equivalent), with the clearance of the Director of the Office of Procurement and the Office of the General Counsel.

If you are contracting personal services from an individual, you only need to consider at least three candidates.

For other contracts, if the value is less than \$100,000, you can negotiate the agreement without going through the formal, competitive process, but you still have to solicit at least three offers unless you have obtained a waiver. Although it may be tempting, you cannot break contracts down into smaller increments simply to stay under the \$100,000 limit.

There are a variety of other scenarios that will absolve you from the full and open competition requirement. USAID's ADS Chapters 302, 303 and 308 provide more details on USG competition requirements and waivers (see www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/300/).

Single Source Procurement:

Single source procurements, which allow you to choose a specific supplier without going through the formal competitive process, are possible only if a waiver is approved by an authorized individual. At USAID, this person must be at the Assistant Administrator level. Situations where you might use this option could include instances where U.S. foreign policy objectives otherwise might be impaired or suppliers with unique capabilities. Again, consult USAID's ADS Chapter 302 and 303 for details (see www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/300/).

5. Is there a faster way besides sole source?

Although not necessarily faster, using pre-competed contracts avoids the requirement for waivers and potential Congressional inquiries. Pre-competed contracts and cooperative agreements are available for all sectors. The suppliers on this list have already gone through a formal competition and are available for use on projects without additional competition requirements. Visit USAID's Office of Procurement website for a list of those in your sector (see www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/).

6. How can I avoid organizational conflict of interest?

You can avoid conflict of interest by being on guard against bias; situations allowing an organization that designed or developed material that led "directly, predictably, and without delay" to a SOW for a contract or grant to then compete for that contract; and unfair, competitive advantage. These three concepts are outlined in more detail on pages 8-9 of this guide.

7. How can I use public-private partnerships effectively? Do they really work?

If a public-private partnership meets your strategic goals, it can be a very effective way of accomplishing your plans. Recent USAID partnerships with the private sector have been very successful. For example, an alliance with M&M Mars & the Hershey's Chocolate in Indonesia is improving cocoa production, raising local incomes and promoting more sustainable production techniques. Every \$1 spent by USAID brings in \$10 from the partnership.

The following checklist may help you determine whether a public-private partnership will help you reach your goal more effectively:

1. Common cause: The issue is important to all prospective partners.
2. Belief in alliances as a strategy: Partners believe this approach is a better one to solve the problem.
3. Presence of a convener: At least one partner has the standing to call the other partners to the table.
4. Principled behavior: The private sector entities you propose to ally yourself with are compatible with the U.S. government's business practices and do not pose any risk in terms of reputation.
5. Resources: Financial and human resources are available, and each partner is willing to commit the resources they are able to share.

6. Willingness to explore opportunities: Partners are willing to take risks together that they might not be willing to take individually and are willing to work creatively.

If you have decided that you're interested in a partnership, get in touch with the USAID contact listed in Section V. The USAID staff can help you locate partners and provide other information and support while you're building a partnership.

In developing a partnership, it is important to make sure that its success is not dependent on particular people. A strong partnership should be more widely grounded within the Mission and the implementing organizations. Otherwise, staff turnover can jeopardize all your work.

8. What are the environmental regulations for foreign assistance programs?

Federal laws require you to assess the potential impact of your project on the environment, especially for projects in agriculture, environment and infrastructure development. This means you need to write or have an expert write a summary description of what you are planning to do and analyze how it might affect the environment and make recommendations, if necessary, to minimize or correct any effects on the environment. Federal law requires this environmental assessment be done before you commit any funds to the project.

9. What are the mandatory reporting requirements for MEPI projects?

Like other projects, MEPI projects require at least annual implementing partner status reports, quarterly financial reports, an assessment of potential environmental impact and a project closeout report. Specifically for MEPI, the implementing agency or contractor is responsible for providing State and the relevant US Government agency that directly manages the program (this may be the USAID CTO or someone from another agency) with monthly informal emails on progress and formal quarterly progress and financial report within 30 days of the end of the quarter by email. This quarterly progress report should highlight 1) progress to date, 2) discussion of issues, and 3) current burn rate of funds by activity/target and unobligated funds remaining.

10. How are appropriations, apportionments, allocations and obligations related?

Congress **appropriates**, i.e., gives permission to, Federal agencies to spend money for specific purposes and programs. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) then releases, or **apportions**, the money to Federal agencies (in the case of ESF funds, to AID). In collaboration with AID, the State Department (DS) approves program budget levels – these are called **allocations**. Allocations have specific time periods, activities, projects, and program objectives tied to them. An **obligation** is a legal liability of the Government to pay for specific goods or services ordered or received. Funds can be obligated through mechanisms like contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements.

V. Additional Resources

A. USAID Expertise

For strategic planning, project/activity design and guidance on performance monitoring and reporting, contact Jim Carlson in USAID's Asia Near East Bureau at jcarlson@usaid.gov and copy Kay Freeman at kfreeman@usaid.gov.

B. Websites

USAID Managing for Results	http://www.usaidresults.org/
USAID Policies and Procedures – The Automated Directives System	http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/
OMB's Program Assessment Ratings Tool (PART)	http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budintegration/part_assessing2004.html
Government Performance and Results Act (1993)	http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmt-gpra/gplaw2m.html
Foreign Assistance Act	http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?IPaddress=wais.access.gpo.gov&dbname=107_cong_senate_committee_prints&docid=f:70363.wais
Federal Acquisition Regulation	http://www.arnet.gov/far/
Code of Federal Regulations 228	http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_02/22cfr228_02.html
Performance Management Toolkit (and worksheets)	http://www.usaid.result.org/ (Click on Tools link in left-hand column)
Overview of Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, and Annual Performance Reports	http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a11/2002/part6.pdf
Preparation and Submission of Strategic Plans	http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a11/2002/part6.pdf
Agencies' Strategic Plans Under GPRA: Key Questions to Facilitate Congressional Review	http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/gg1016.pdf
TIPS Number 01, Conducting a Participatory Evaluation	http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNABS539.pdf
TIPS Number 07, Preparing a Performance Management Plan	http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNABY215.pdf
TIPS Number 15, Measuring Institutional Capacity	http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACG612.pdf
Model Pre-obligation checklist	http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/200/200sar.pdf

C. Toolkits

1. Performance Management Toolkit (<http://www.usaid.result.org/> - click on **Tools** on left)
2. OMB Program Assessment Ratings Tool Guidebook
http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budintegration/part_guidance_instructions.doc

D. State Department Contact

Specific questions and concerns can be directed to the MEPI Program Coordinator in NEA/PI, Holly Peirce (peircemh@state.gov; 202-736-7408).

VI. Annexes

A. Sample Draft Strategy

Below is a draft strategy from the education sector. Its focus is mainly regional, but it may give you some ideas on how to structure your strategic planning. If you are working in the education sector, it also provides some sample project suggestions that might be useful.

Education in the Middle East: DRAFT Strategic Plan for Implementation

“Education has become distant from the hands-on experience of the workplace, alien from the everyday needs of production...”

“Poor quality has become the Achilles heel of education in the Arab world”

2002 Arab Human Development Report

Background

The burgeoning interest in education in the Middle East over the past decade and the concomitant increase in education funding by donors, NGOs and national governments have had positive effects as evidenced by increased enrollment rates, reduced gender inequities and improved adult illiteracy rates, greater involvement of non-government organizations, community groups and parents in decision making, and significant improvements in educational information and in analytic and evaluative capacity. In spite of this progress, educational reform in the Arab world continues to be severely constrained by poor quality, irrelevancy, limited access, and insufficient demand, especially for girls and women. Some manifestations:

- In the majority of Middle East countries, girls lag behind boys in primary school enrollments, and less than 50% of Arab girls attend secondary school
- Gender disparities in completion rates are evident across the region for ranging from Morocco (47 percent completion for girls, 63 percent for boys), to the Republic of Yemen (38 percent for girls, 77 percent for boys)
- Over half of adult Arab women are illiterate. Illiteracy rates for women and the poor are higher in the rural areas
- High unemployment and large numbers of unemployed out-of-school youth constitute a potential source of conflict and fertile breeding ground for civil unrest. Unemployment in the Middle East alone is 20%, of which three-quarters are young people who lack skills needed for a modern economy; underemployment and loss of hope in the future are also major problems.
- There are significant enrollment increases in Islamic schools. A minority of such schools actively promote violent, anti-Western attitudes.
- The Middle East has the lowest access to Internet and communications technology in the world, including Sub-Saharan Africa

Country Initiatives

In order for meaningful educational reform to take place, policy changes must occur on the country level and incorporate larger issues pertaining to gender equity, literacy and skills development, decentralization, community involvement, curriculum reform, and teacher training.

Within the context of improving quality, access and demand, ANE's Middle East education reform strategy will focus on the following key areas:

- A. Improving retention and access to basic education, especially for girls.** Develop programs that provide basic education to the most marginalized such as the rural poor, children outside the school system - whether at work in the street or refugees, and out-of-school girls, through strategies involving both the formal education system and the alternatives offered by the non-formal sector. Strategies that can stimulate demand for education for girls and other marginalized groups include targeted stipends, labor-saving technologies, locating schools closer to communities, curricular reform efforts to promote life-skills education that promotes critical thinking and lifelong learning, recruiting more female teachers and administrators, and making schools more attractive to parents and communities.
- B. Adult literacy and workforce training.** The lack of curricular relevance to daily life has played a key role in explaining low enrollments and high dropout rates, especially in rural areas, and lack of interest in and enthusiasm for schooling generally. Compounding this is the critical need for skilled, marketable and literate workforces that meet personal needs, as well as those of the private sector and global economy. Literate populations can revert to being illiterate if they do not have the opportunities to practice their newly acquired skills. Teaching/learning literacy is more relevant and sustainable when it is tied to basic human needs or work and life skills, and thus has everyday, practical use in children's and adults' lives. ANE will facilitate public-private partnerships and other institutional linkages to provide cost-effective, innovative and market relevant skill development for marginalized populations.
- C. Early Childhood Education.** Improving the quality of, and access to, early childhood education (ECE) and care has become an important policy priority. ECE is increasingly seen as a key component of a successful educational, social and family policy agenda and is viewed as a critical initial step in lifelong learning. In addition, early childhood education frees up caretakers' time (usually mothers) to pursue lucrative employment opportunities, skills training, or further schooling while their children are in school. Providing children with safe, stimulating spaces for learning, and play, where their physical growth, development of senses, and their adjustment to peers stimulates their mental, emotional, and social abilities is one of ANE's priorities for this region.
- D. Teacher training, quality instructional materials, and improved accountability.** Far more than any one other single element, governmental and private-sector leaders at all levels, parents and citizens groups, cite teacher training – frequently accompanied by training for school principals and administrators – as the over-riding most critical need in ANE countries. Ongoing professional development in content areas and pedagogical skills for teachers will be supported through teacher networks and resource centers emphasizing alternative teaching methodologies, interactive student-centered learning, inquiry, critical thinking skills and human rights training. Setting accreditation and assessment standards to improve poor quality and low school performance is an important aspect of teacher quality, and is enhanced by establishing clear learning goals for student learning. By expanding decision-making authority at the classroom and school levels, and rewarding teaching performance and rural and difficult postings, greater accountability for educational results can be improved locally. Shorter formal training, more hands-on training, and support for distance delivery will focus on educational results through training institutes, workshops, and training camps. Distance education can

be particularly helpful for improving teaching and learning, through the use of radio, Internet, and other information technologies.

Regional Initiatives

Islamic Education

Programming and policy alterations for helping ANE host governments and NGOs implement education reform in Middle East countries range from introduction of inter-active, inquiry-based teaching methods to helping local authorities mainstream *madrassa*-based education. In addition to providing Missions with a regional forum for dialogue/debate on Islamic education, MEPI will also provide for the implementation of regional education initiatives. It will address the quality and breadth of instruction—while leaving intact religious instruction as a socio-cultural heritage—by assisting educators, local religious and lay leaders and the teachers unions to improve *madrassa* schools, in part to better prepare students for productive employment in the traditional and modern economies. Promoting quality learning in social studies, mathematics, sciences, and English will be a focus. Teachers and school principals must be trained inter-actively and creatively in critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skills and guide students in these “new” subjects. Textbooks, teachers’ manuals and supplementary materials will have to be developed.

ICT for the knowledge economy

There is a critical need to better exploit understanding and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to broaden the reach of basic education, particularly for remote learning; to enhance and improve classroom teaching; and for job skill development. ICT include traditional (radio and TV) and the new ICT (Internet and telecommunications) all of which are key in educational reform and can be used to transform learning in new and powerful ways and define as well as shape new learning opportunities. However, it should be kept in mind that ICT can accentuate differences between those who have access to technology and those who lack it and appropriate choice of ICT is critical.

This regional strategy will identify and implement appropriate ICT approaches based on contextual realities, while ensuring that ICT be used as a unifying and not a divisive force.

Implicit within this strategy is the reality it is not technology but content that delivers education success. While a major part of this effort will be to encourage public-private sector partnerships to impart market-relevant skills and knowledge and co-share costs of educational technology reform, interventions will be identified based on relevance and ensuring public interest and public good. For example, whereas e-learning may be an appropriate option for urban Egypt, interactive radio instruction may be better-suited to the conditions found in rural Egypt.”

A sound regional education program and ICT strategy would support basic education and training by:

- (i) **Supporting content.** Content is the most important component of the information industry, yet policy-makers in the region have to date focused mainly on the telecommunications infrastructure. Application software including educational, administrative, and financial software, are limited for the region, and information services are rather modest, owing to lack of resources, personnel and weak demand. A key element of content is the lack of coherent strategies to fully integrate the use of ICT as pedagogical tools in the classroom. For example, many ministries of education view computers as a stand-alone subject requiring a curriculum focusing

on basic computer literacy skills. While computer literacy represents a start, the integration of computers and the Internet into the broader curriculum is where real learning gains will be made.

- (ii) **Supporting education in schools.** Provide access to relevant information sources, curriculum, enable communications, create interacting learning environment and promote change in methods of teaching. Quality and access to up-to-date and relevant materials can be improved with the use of ICT while offsetting costs of textbooks. Emphasizing that ICT is a tool for communicating knowledge requires that the computation of the Arabic language be seen as a basic starting point.
- (iii) **Providing non-formal education for out-of-school children and adults, and girls.** Helping to build the capacity of children, youth, and adults using appropriate technology can be a way to expand and complement the formal education system and empower girls and other marginalized groups of learners. ICT helps to reach children and adults who cannot go to school for remoteness and/or for opportunity costs. Both radio and television are more likely to widen access than the newer ICTs (computers and Internet). However the possibility of two-way communications with new ICTs are attractive where the target group have easy access to them, for example, in urban areas. Whereas radio is a critical channel for disseminating education messages and programs in rural areas, girls in urban areas could benefit from having access to the Internet to obtain teen-related information that is often taboo in their cultures, such as sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancies, and AIDS and its prevention.
- (iv) **Supporting pre-service distance education of teachers and their in-service professional development.** The professional development of teachers sits at the heart of any successful technology and education program. Teacher education using ICTs are increasingly becoming popular because of the possibilities of the ‘multiplier effect’, greater interactivity between students and tutor, opportunities for learners to proceed at their own pace, and the possibilities of combining video, audio and texts to improve delivery and quality of instruction

Suggested Programs: Country and Regional

Traditionally, the public sector provided most education services. Today that is changing. In many developing countries, the private sector is growing, fostered by the poor quality and coverage of public education and in response to the demands of the market place. At the same time, new providers – private sector training, virtual universities, international training providers, corporate universities, educational publishers, content brokers, and media companies – have arisen to complement and challenge traditional institutions and promote innovation. The growth of the private education and training sector is of enormous value for the knowledge economy, and public-private partnerships are the key to the success of education programs in the Middle East.

Within the context of encouraging public-private sector partnerships to provide access to quality education and training, detailed below are some suggested programs/interventions:

- Increased support for scholarship and incentives, parent-teacher associations, and mentoring programs aimed at attracting and keeping girls in school
 - Morocco: Private-public partnership with BMCE Bank’s Medersat.com—a rural community school program—to support of creating materials centered on

- participatory learning, critical skills and rural access, especially for girls and marginalized youth.
 - Jordan: Provide school bags, shoes and nutritional supplements for poorer kindergarten children
 - Yemen: Provide incentives/scholarships to attract and recruit female teachers to serve in rural areas
 - Regional: Physical refurbishment of schools to elicit girls participation especially in rural areas: walls, toilets, furniture, etc.
- Utilize Information and Communication Technology to provide education and training.
 - Jordan: ICT initiative in the form of a Jordanian interactive computer program for ECE children.
 - Yemen: Education Management Information System for decentralized education management and accountability
 - Regional: Establish an on-line America/Middle East Arabic Education Portal Global Learning Portal in Arabic to facilitate the exchange of education and knowledge among students, teachers, administrators and policy makers.
- Support curriculum reform efforts within the formal schooling system, to develop educational content that promotes critical thinking and reflection for life-long learning and improves educational content to promote critical thinking, tolerance, and civic values
 - Sponsor education programs for primary and secondary students and teachers focusing on civic values.
- Improve teachers' and administrators' performance in school
 - Expand in-service and pre-service teacher and administrator training across the region
 - Establish admission criteria and regulation for new teachers and principals and build new teachers' training concept with systematic monitoring.
 - Train school administrators on management, planning, support and follow teachers' performance.
- School-to-work transitions through work-study/internship programs in local businesses, industries and government offices.
 - Possibility of partnering with training institutions such as Cisco Academies to provide training and appropriate skills development to girls and marginalized youth.
- Functional literacy and skill development programs for youth and women
 - Yemen: Given the large numbers of out of school-children and illiterate women, address workforce and training possibilities. Teaching/learning literacy and mathematics concepts in and of themselves are more sustainable when they are tied to a particular skill or have everyday practical use such as skills training for small ruminant care, literacy for household accounting, skills and training to increase income opportunities and food security etc.
- Accelerated schooling for over-age students e.g. two-three shift multi-grade classrooms and improved education re-entry programs targeting out-of-school children and young adults

- Yemen: Accelerated learning for out of school primary/secondary school students in rural areas.
- Promote parent and community involvement in decentralized school management, monitoring and accountability
- Support community training centers to provide literacy and skills training opportunities for out of school girls and rural women
 - Morocco and Jordan: Work on creating training opportunities aimed at jump-starting the region and providing the foundation for accelerated economic growth within the context of FTA and to facilitate the creation of a hotbed of economic activity. This is a critical area of untapped need; small injections of technical expertise into the area can take advantage of the liberalization of the telecommunications industry.
- Model programs for early learning
 - Country pilots and regional expansion of Sesame Street (based on current experience with the program's success in Egypt)

Expected Programmatic Outcomes

- Increased female literacy
- Increased education enrollments and completion, especially for girls
- Spread tolerance, human dignity, and civic values
- Significantly increased numbers of youth and young adults trained with employable skills
- Reduced numbers of out of school children and youth
- Increase public-private sector partnerships
- Greatly increased prevalence of interactive, inquiry-based teaching and learning
- Heightened excitement and fun in the learning process
- More non-formal education opportunities

B. Budget Template

	Category	Description	Total
Salaries & Benefits			
	Salary	\$/day * number of days required ¹	
	Benefits	30% of salary	
	Subtotal		
Other Direct Costs			
	Travel/Per Diem		
	Materials & Supplies		
	Communications/ Publications		
	Transport	Equipment, vehicles & household effects	
	Equipment & Vehicles		
	Subtotal		
Overhead			
	Overhead	100% of salaries and benefits or 50% of salaries and other direct costs	
Total			
Fee		For-profits charge up to 10% of total as a fee; not-for-profits have no fee.	
GRAND TOTAL			

¹**SAMPLE DAILY RATES:**

Expatriate Senior Advisor - \$424/day

Expatriate Mid-level Advisor - \$314/day (without locality pay)

Local Advisor - approximately \$100/day (will depend upon location)

Local Support Staff – approximately \$20/day (will depend upon location)